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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 6681  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 2194  
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 7982  
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY 4009  
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY 2534  
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ISLAMABAD 004816

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TAGS: [AEMR](#) [AMGT](#) [CASC](#) [KFLO](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PK](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: MGPK01: SITREP 16, AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD: BHUTTO  
RELEASED; AMBASSADOR DEMARCHES ON ARREST CASES

REF: ISLAMABAD 4814

Classified By: DCM Peter Bodde, Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: The GOP lifted the virtual house arrest on Pakistan People's Party (PPP) leader Benazir Bhutto. Ambassador raised Amcit and civil society detainees cases with Interior Minister. Lahore CG met separately with human rights activist Asma Jahangir and Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) leader Liaqat Baloch. Restrictions on TV cable news channels continue. Mission offices continue to operate normally, and the Embassy's Marine Ball is scheduled for tonight. This is the only sitrep for today. Unless events warrant a sitrep on Sunday, November 11, post will resume sitreps on Monday, November 12. End summary.

¶2. (U) The government of Pakistan yesterday lifted PPP leader Benazir Bhutto's virtual house arrest. Media reports that PPP activists and police were involved in "street clashes" in various cities and that the government arrested an unknown number of PPP members.

¶3. (C) Ambassador met with Minister of Interior Sherpao and raised our concerns about Amcit Hashmat Dilwari; Sherpao promised to try and get him released. (Islamabad CG is awaiting permission for a prison visit.) Ambassador also raised the cases of jailed Pakistani politicians and civil society leaders, including Munir Malik (former president of Supreme Court Bar Association), Ali Ahmed Kurd (senior lawyer on the defense team for the former Chief Justice), Justice Tariq Mahmud (an anti-government lawyer), five female PPP leaders, and the 17 activists charged with sedition (reftel) in Karachi. Sherpao promised to check into the cases. With Musharraf's announcement that elections would be held before February 15, Sherpao said that the GOP began what will be a gradual process of rolling back the state of emergency. He did not give any timetable. Ambassador emphasized the damage that yesterday's house arrest of Benazir Bhutto and the crackdown on civil society was doing to Pakistan's image in the U.S. Sherpao said that the National Security Council debated for two hours on whether to allow the PPP's Rawalpindi rally to go forward but decided that the risk of a suicide bombing was too great to allow it to proceed.

Lahore  
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¶3. (U) Lahore CG reports that targeted round-ups of political opponents continues, but that life is proceeding normally for

most Pakistanis. Police continue to tolerate student protests as long as they remain on campus.

14. (U) Local newspapers gave prominent coverage to Lahore CG's November 9 meetings with human rights activist Asma Jahangir and Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) leader Liaqat Baloch, both of whom are still under house arrest. Baloch said the religious parties block, Mutahaida Majlis Amal (MMA), decided during its meeting to give Musharraf until November 15 to resign from his post in the Army; otherwise, the MMA plans to hold protests against Musharraf starting on November 16.

Peshawar  
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15. (U) Sporadic protests occurred across the Northwest Frontier Province yesterday. In Peshawar, police baton-charged and tear gassed protesters. The GOP yesterday closed the main entry and exit points on the highway to stymie protests, and stop PPP activists from traveling from Peshawar to Rawalpindi. Peshawar Consulate RSO is not expecting large protests today.

16. (U) Militants in Swat released between 45 and 60 paramilitary soldiers captured earlier in the week, according to Pakistani press. The captured soldiers had publicly complained that they were low on rations and had not been receiving reinforcements.

Karachi  
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17. (U) PPP Sindh Provincial President, Qaim Ali Shah,

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announced on November 9 that a "black day" protest will take place throughout Sindh on Sunday, November 11. (Note: Sindh is Benazir Bhutto's home and power base.)

18. (U) Although Karachi remains relatively calm today, protesters shut down the National Highway and some stores for at least two hours yesterday near Gadap Town, a PPP stronghold in Karachi. People throughout the Sindh interior protested yesterday against the arrest of Bhutto, and dozens of activists were arrested in Mirpurkhas, Dadu, Badin, and Naushahro Feroze.

19. (U) In Quetta, approximately 40 to 50 journalists protested yesterday at the Quetta Press Club, but the gathering was disbanded peaceful when the police arrived.

PATTERSON